

## Chapter Ten

Along with the decision concerning the judgment over custody over a child by two harlots which occurred early on in his reign (Chapter Three), King Solomon is best remembered by the visit of the queen of Sheba. Her story is recounted here, this chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now.” In this instance it serves not only to show the close relationship between what had just happened but to introduce a wholly different element into the ongoing account of Solomon’s reign. We have no information as to her identity; furthermore, some uncertainty exists as the location of Sheba. Despite all this, it enhances her mystery, including her being the first woman whom King Solomon is about to encounter on an equal footing. In a sense, we could say that after the queen’s visit, everything goes downhill for Solomon and his successors, essentially until the appearance of Elijah the prophet in Chapter Seventeen. Being aware of this fact prepares us for the depressing accounts sandwiched in between now and then.

The queen had heard of King Solomon’s fame. Just by their sound, five words as they stand rapid fire in the text convey what was passing through her mind: *Shevah*, *shamahath*, *shemah*, *Shelmoh* and *leshem* (Sheba, report, heard, Solomon and name). “Fame” or *shemah* derives from the verb *shamah* (cf. 8.49) or to hear, in reference to those reports had reached the queen in her kingdom. The distance—either northern Arabia or Yemen—is secondary. With this in mind, the queen decided to pay a visit more specifically because this *shemah* received pertains to the “name of the Lord.” After all, the Lord himself spoke of this in 8.19: “nevertheless you (King David) shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.” In addition to this the queen heard of Solomon’s other building projects as well as his wisdom let alone his fabulous wealth.

In addition to this intriguing nature of the *shemah* made all the more enticing by reason of the distance involved, King Solomon just might prove to be a threat to her own rule as well as to other local rulers. And so the queen was well informed, not setting out on an arduous journey simply to see and to admire Solomon but to test him with some tough questions. The verb is *nasah* (can also mean to tempt) with *chydah* which comes from a verbal root meaning to twist and refers to a difficult sentence. “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old” [Ps 78.2].

Vs. 2 describes the arrival of the queen of Sheba in Jerusalem as with a “very great retinue,” the noun being *chayl* (cf. 1.52) with the adjective *kaved*. This connotes something heavy along with the adverb *me’od* (cf. 5.7) which means anything done in excess or beyond the mark. Obviously such a caravan caught the attention of everyone along the way, news about it having reached King Solomon long before...in fact, even the very day

she left her native land. The impressiveness of this retinue pales in comparison to what this verse conveys, namely, that once the queen arrived in Jerusalem, she wasted no time visiting Solomon. In fact we get the impression that she didn't even unpack or settle down, for "she told him all that was on her mind," *lev* (cf. 9.4) also meaning heart. Clearly this visit was not a diplomatic one but strictly personal which must have roused some eyebrows among the local population.

The conjunctive *v*- beginning vs. 3 reflect the queen of Sheba's urgency for the real purpose of her visit, that is, King Solomon answered all her questions, *nagad* also as to declare in the sense of bringing to light. En route to Jerusalem the queen had plenty of time to ponder as well as to consult others with her as to the nature of these questions. Even before this her desire to *davar* had taken root within her a long time before setting out from Sheba to Jerusalem. She was being guided there with her huge retinue by that *davar* not unlike the magi being guided to Bethlehem by the star. Perhaps later the magi themselves pondered this journey, she being to them a kind of predecessor. So in response to telling King Solomon in vs. 3 or her *davar* of what was on her heart, he provided more than an adequate response to her inquiries, that is, to her *davar* or word-as-expression. In effect there was no *davar* hidden from her *davar*, the verb *halam* interestingly implying a covering over with words, that is, beating around the bush. Nothing is said about this exchange which makes it all the more intriguing.

This mysterious exchange is put in terms of the queen having seen (*raha*) "all the wisdom" of King Solomon, that is, his *chakmah* (cf. 7.14). Note that vs. 1 has her having heard of the king followed by her again having heard his response to her questions. However, now she sees the wisdom that has produced all this. In sum, the queen of Sheba makes a transition from hearing to seeing which moves on to a tour of all the splendid surroundings and possessions of King Solomon. Most likely he was her personal guide not having to explain things, just point them out. However, one further step remains which is presented in vs. 5: "there was no more spirit in her," *ruach* also as breath. It was as though this combination of hearing and seeing removed the queen's very ability to breathe. No longer did she feel the need to communicate or better, no longer could do so. She had seen Solomon's *chakmah* manifested, if you will, into his surroundings. Perhaps the queen was pondering within herself whether somehow she might emulate this in her own kingdom. Then again, being able to translate her exchange of words...her *davar*...with Solomon would be the real key to any future success. This must have occupied her during the trip home.

Vs. 6 begins with the familiar conjunctive showing the rapid-fire exchange of *davar* between the queen of Sheba and her host, King Solomon. Now through vs. 9 she launches into a series of high praises of what she had experienced. Although her *ruach* may have left

her, enough remains for her to give voice. The queen acknowledges that the *davar* she had heard (*shamah*, cf. vs. 1) corresponded with what she had seen as well as his affairs (*davar* again) including his wisdom or *chakmah* (cf. vs. 4). The queen also admits that she didn't believe the reports (*davar*) until she came to see for herself, claiming in vs. 7 that Solomon's wisdom and prosperity (*chakmah* and *tov*: vs. 6 and the common adjective for good) didn't come close to what she had heard of them. She also exclaims how happy are his wives (the Hebrew has 'men'), '*ashrey* having the force of an interjection as in the case of the first word of the first psalm. The same applies to Solomon's servants, *heved* (cf. 5.6) basically meaning a slave, they lucky enough to be in his presence although if asked privately, they'd rather be set free. At least they fared much better than other slaves.

In vs. 9 the queen of Sheba spontaneously blesses the Lord, calling him "your God" meaning the one of King Solomon, these words expressing the fact that she's an outsider looking in with great admiration. The Lord has taken delight in him, *chaphets* (cf. 9.1) suggestive of ardor and esteem and has placed Solomon on his throne. These words must have delighted the king because it's one of the first times someone in authority does not acknowledge his father David. However, never could Solomon admit that publically, not even to those with whom he was most intimate. The queen continues in this same verse, that the Lord has loved Israel, '*ahavah* being a noun where the text reads literally as "in love the Lord Israel." He does this in order that justice and righteousness may be carried out, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah* (cf. 9.4 and 3.16 respectively).

After these verses of high praise and admiration tinged, to be sure, with a certain desire to implement in her own kingdom of Seba the same, the queen presents King Solomon a lavish gift of gold, spices and precious stones. The spices are singled out as being in such an abundance due to their exotic nature; Solomon certainly was rich enough in gold and precious stones, but spices from Sheba were another thing. The queen knew of this beforehand, knowing it would make an impression and possibly set up profitable trade between Israel and Sheba.

Between this incident of gift giving by the queen and an account of Solomon's generosity we have an interlude of sorts with vs.s 11-12, the **RSV** saying in a footnote that it's related to 9.26-28. It's comprised of the next-to-last mention of Hiram, the last being vs. 22. Actually reference is to his ships which provided almug wood and precious stones for the two houses or *bayth* (cf. 9.8): of the Lord and of Solomon, this type of wood being possibly juniper. Apparently it's quality was so good that none "has come or been seen to this day."

Vs. 13 brings to conclusion the visit of the queen of Sheba to King Solomon, this verse beginning with the conjunctive *v-* after the interlude of the past few verses just noted. He gave her all that she had desired, *chaphets* (cf. vs. 9) and then some. We have no record of

her actual request but can assume it wasn't much, materially speaking. The queen had obtained what she came for, the wisdom of Solomon which hopefully could be applied to governing her native land of Sheba. Throughout this story it may be tempting to consider that the two had a love affair. However, the all-important element of the queen's search for wisdom or *chakmah* overrides such interjections.

The second sentence of vs. 13 is significant, it too beginning with the conjunctive *v-*: "So she turned and went back to her own land." First comes the turning (*panah*, cf. 8.28) followed by going back (*halak*, cf. 8.61). This turning or literally facing in one direction reveals both the high point of King Solomon's reign and the transfer of what's best in it to the queen of Sheba even though after this she disappears completely. As noted earlier, this is the precise point from which it's all downhill for Solomon. Such is the significance of the queen's *panah*.

Before King Solomon begins his ill-fated descent prophesied by Nathan, we remain at reasonably high level for some time which provides breathing space to pause and take in what had happened since the death of King David. Thus the remaining verses of this chapter go into some detail as to Solomon's business dealings, the lavish throne, drinking vessels and a whole slew of essentially boring though lavish details. Among all this we have the final mention of Hiram with regard to his fleet of ships. Perhaps around this point Hiram not so much deserts his friend but withdraws gradually, parallel to the *panah-halak* of the queen of Sheba. As for the peak of Solomon's career, it can be summed up with vs. 24: "And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom." Both the queen of Sheba and Hiram can concur, they continuing to watch the unfolding of events in Israel and obviously struck with great dismay with Solomon's downfall and the chaos that ensued.

1) shemah, shamah, nasah, chydah, 2) chayl, kaved, me'od, lev, 3) halam, 4) rahah, chakmah, 5) ruach, 6) shamah, chakmah, 7) chakmah, 8) 'ashrey, heved, 9) chaphets, 'ahavah, mishpat, tsedaqah, 12) bayth, 13) chaphets, panah, halak

## Chapter Eleven

The conjunctive *v-* beginning this new chapter translated as "now" is significant insofar as it signals King Solomon's long-anticipated fall from grace, his encounter with the two harlots, his building projects and the queen of Sheba being the highlights of his reign. The opening verse says simply that he "loved many foreign women," *'ahav* (cf. 5.1) being the verb which means an intense longing with the adjective *nakry*' (cf. 8.41) having a certain air of hostility about it. Next we have a list of these women from five nation, then of course,

Pharaoh's daughter as noted in 3.1. The Lord turned a blind eye towards that marriage since it was an alliance with Egypt and thus a means of maintaining peace with that superpower to the south. As for the others—and we don't get the exact number which is staggering until vs. 3—the five peoples from which Solomon got his wives were condemned roundly by the Lord. They are the *goy* or nations whom the Lord said would turn Solomon's heart (*lev*, cf. 11.2) away after their gods, the verb being *natah* (cf. 8.58). The adverb '*aken* or "surely" is thrown in for good measure.

This turning away as it impinges upon the heart of the king suggests a whole series of intimate, sexual relationships. The women must have taken turns, one for each night it seems. Certainly they were chosen for their beauty it seems which reflected the same seductive beauty of how they worshiped their gods. Their practices must have been quite esoteric compared with the stark oneness of the Lord. Therefore it was one easy step for Solomon to take from the women to their gods. While he was enjoying a different woman for each night, his conscience must have reminded him of Israel's tradition of worship of the one Lord, that he was violating it big time. Yet his behavior which started off more or less innocently with the daughter of Pharaoh devolved quickly into a trap he couldn't escape even if he wanted to. At this point Solomon may have wished for Nathan the prophet to come along and set him straight, but long ago he passed off the scene.

Assembling such an entourage didn't happen overnight. Mention of Pharaoh's daughter means he got a taste for these so-called foreign women a bit later, she most likely having brought along consorts or the like. Interestingly the peoples from which Solomon procured his multitude of wives are not for other lands. They are indigenous to Israel...previously Canaan...warned about by the Lord himself in Dt 7.1 where they are to be cleared away, *nashal* meaning to draw out or fall off. Joshua too received a similar command and carried it out as best he could. However, despite this as well as the intervention of Israel's judges later on, never could the command be carried out in full. Failure lay squarely at the feet of the Israelites who found these foreign gods too irresistible due to their exotic forms of worship compared with the rather stern monotheistic and somewhat abstract worship of the Lord. The most recent example of this confusion of gods vs. God was Solomon's visit to Gibeon when "he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places" [3.3]. So all along Solomon was no different from any other Israelite. The problem is that he has to set an example to his people, and that really angered the Lord.

As for the warning in vs. 2 which is presented coming from the Lord directly, it's an insertion of sorts as a reminder with regard to Israel's checkered past when dealing with the Canaanite inhabitants. At the end of this verse are the simple yet direct words summing it all up: "Solomon clung to these in love." The verb is *davaq* which suggests stickiness, not unlike glue, from which it's impossible to free oneself. The noun '*ahavah*

(cf. 10.9) serves to compound the matter. As for the context, *davaq* can apply to both the foreign women and their gods, many of which may have had sacred prostitution as part of their rites.

Vs. 3 gets down to the gritty details, namely, that King Solomon had seven hundred wives, princesses and three hundred concubines. A number is given to the first and third but not the second. Excluding them we have a total of some one thousand women frequenting the palace, that being a less than accurate total number.

Vs. 4 is a jump from the above mentioned wives turning away Solomon's heart or *lev* (cf. vs. 2) to his old age or when they carried on the same activities. It adds the fact that this same heart wasn't true to the Lord, the adjective being *shalem* which being at peace or perfect. So it seems that these foreign women both at the beginning as well as the end of Solomon's life did a real number on him, the middle years naturally being included. It's hard to conceive for how long one's heart or *lev* could hold out against such a continuous onslaught, *lev* being mentioned twice to show the gravity of the situation. Then vs. 4 throws in what Solomon dreads but never admits, another comparison with his father King David, especially with reference to his *lev* which remained faithful to the Lord.

In the next few verses King Solomon "went after (*halak*, cf. 10.13; plus *'acharey*) Ashtoreth and Milcom, this verb clearly indicating that he pursued their worship on his own. Surely those wives and others associated with these two gods were pleased to have subverted Israel's king. If they and others kept it up, they just might bring about the downfall of the kingdom which, despite being well established, can be subverted and driven out...all the way back to Egypt. Ashtoreth is a goddess and Milcom an abomination or *shiquts* which is even worse, the last time this word being mentioned is way back in Dt 29.17 in reference to both Egypt and nations through which Israel had passed en route to Canaan: "and you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold which were among them." Being an absolute ruler, no body could check Solomon unless a prophet rose up, but none was on the horizon.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "so," this being the fifth consecutive instance when it's used thus far in Chapter Eleven with the exception of vs. 2. If you look at them all as in this instance (more to come, of course), they are indicative of Solomon's rapid fall from grace due to having so many foreign women around him...and foreign women, of course, equals foreign gods. Here the turning away of King Solomon's heart by these women makes him do not just evil or *rah* (cf. 9.9) but in the Lord's sight which literally means eyes. In other words, the Lord is not absent through all this but is keeping tabs on Solomon who didn't follow after him, this being rendered literally as "did not fill

(*male*) after.” Once again, the standard of King David is brought up who did this *male*’ after.

Vs. 7 continues to recount the cascading negative effect of the foreign women and their gods upon King Solomon...not just that but to the whole house of Israel. His next move is to build a high place or *bamah* to both Chemosh and Molech which this verse calls the *shiquts* (cf. vs. 5) of Moab and the Ammonites. As for Chemosh and Molech, no need to offer an explanation. Their very names have an alien ring to it. To add insult to injury, Solomon erects one high place for both on a mountain east of Jerusalem, most likely today’s Mount of Olives. That means it stared right down at the recently built temple of the Lord which Solomon himself had erected. No doubt, he recalled his experience at Gibeon where he worshiped the Lord. If that place had a *bamah* as well as one to sacrifice to the Lord (so thought Solomon), why not the new *bamah* and temple opposite it in Jerusalem? Now his foreign wives had a place to freely offer incense and sacrifices. Although this was a *shiquts* as just noted, chances are that a good many Israelites joined them since the practice of dual worship, if you will, was still quite prevalent.

The conjunctive *v*- beginning vs. 9 continues the fast pace of successive events saying that the Lord was angry with Solomon, ‘*anaph* (cf. 8.46 but not noted there) being a vivid way to express this anger by breathing through the nostrils. One can imagine that such ‘*anaph* was done quickly and rather noisily. The fact that the Lord had appeared to the king twice aggravates the situation further referring to 3.4-5 and 9.1-9. The first was with regard to Solomon asking for an “understanding mind” and the second, more conditional in the sense that several times the Lord uses the conjunction “if” with respect to following his ways. So in a short time the foreign wives along with their gods undid all this, Solomon seemingly oblivious to what had brought it about.

In vs. 10 reference is made to “this thing” or this *davar* or the Lord commanding King Solomon not to follow other gods. Instead, he failed to *shamar* (cf. 9.6) this or failed to *shamar* the *davar*, a word-as-expression uttered by the Lord. Now the Lord decided to step in and give vent to his anger or ‘*anaph* by speaking to him, the nature of which isn’t specified, dream or vision. He begins by saying that worship of other gods has been in Solomon’s mind or literally as “with you” and throws in another failure to *shamar* the covenant and statutes. While the Lord was uttering...’*anaph*...these words, Solomon knew what was coming next and braced himself for the impact.

Just as strong as the verb ‘*anaph* is *qarah* which means to tear or rend as a garment, this concerning the kingdom over which Solomon is presiding. An example is found a bit later in vs. 30, the current one predicting what follows here: “Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him and tore it into twelve pieces.” Once the kingdom is so torn, the

Lord will hand it over to Solomon's servant or *heved* (cf. 10.8) also as a slave; his identity isn't specified but doesn't forebode well. One possibility which turned out to be true is Jeroboam who later became first king of the divided northern kingdom of Israel, he being "the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a *heved* of Solomon" [cf. vs. 26]. After this threat, the Lord relents for one reason only that's now very familiar to Solomon. The Lord won't bring about a rupture in Solomon's lifetime because of David. In a sense, this is the first time Solomon could breathe a sigh of relief, having been compared constantly to his father. Because of him, the Lord divine *qarah* will happen after Solomon's death or when his son becomes king, that being Rehoboam (cf. vs. 43). As for his mother, her name is Naamah (cf. 14-21-31) of whom we know next to nothing. Yet Naamah must have stood out in some way among the hundreds of Solomon's wives and consorts. As for the memory of King David, it's brought up again in vs. 13 where the Lord says that he'll give one tribe to his son out of respect for him.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 14 shows that the trouble which the Lord mentioned in the past few verses is finally at hand. It takes the form of an adversary against King Solomon by the Lord with the implication that this *qum* (cf. 9.5) is destined to be permanent in one way or another. *Satan* (cf. 5.4) is the noun for adversary which literally will be "to (*l-*) Solomon." The *satan* is Hadad the Edomite. This fellow of royal affiliation understandably bore a grudge against Solomon going back as vs.s 15-16 recounts to when Joab, under the command of King David, had slain all the men, *karath* being the verb which means to cut off. However, Hadad's family managed to escape to Egypt when he was very young.

A retinue of Edomites along with Hadad found favor with Pharaoh of Egypt who gave him a house, food as well as land. Note that early in King Solomon's reign an alliance of marriage was made between him and Pharaoh's daughter. It seems that somewhere along the line that had fallen apart, possibly due to Solomon's penchant for foreign women. In fact she may even had conspired with her father to assist Hadad when he got older, one way of getting revenge for her husband's infidelity. As for Hadad, he and his host, Pharaoh of Egypt, got along so well that he married the queen's sister. After some time, King David had died which seemed to offer an opportunity for Hadad to return home and take out his vengeance. Pharaoh was reluctant to have him leave but in the end relented. So much for the first *qum*.

The second *qum* is Razon in vs. 23 who becomes king in Damascus over Syria, this verse, of course, beginning with the conjunctive *v-*. Like Hadad, his gripe goes back to King David ('after the slaughter of David') and takes out his hatred on Solomon. Similar to Hadad, Razon becomes a *satan* (cf. vs. 14) for the duration of Solomon's reign and has an unremitting abhorrence for Israel, *quts* meaning a sickening dread.

Along with the conjunctive *v-*, vs. 26 has a third *qum* with regard to Jeroboam, a servant (*heved*) of Solomon referred to in vs. 11 who there is yet to be named. As for *qum*, it's with respect to the hand of Jeroboam against or literally "in (*b-*) the king." Vs. 27 begins an account (*davar*, here as 'reason why') of this *qum-plus-b-* which stems from Solomon's construction of the Millo noted in 9.15 as an earthen work south of the temple area. In addition to this he closed a breach belonging to Jerusalem here described as "the city of David his father," yet another reference to Solomon's father.

In order to carry out these two projects, Solomon put Jeroboam in charge, seeing that he was both very able and industrious, *gibor chayl* and *hasah mela'kah*. The first pair consists of two nouns, *gibor* as one who is might as a warrior and *chayl* (cf. 10.2) as faculty or power. The second pair contains the common verb *hasah* (to make, to do, cf. 8.59) and the noun *mela'kah* or handiwork, craftsmanship. As for *paqad*, the verb pertaining to be put in charge, it has a certain military sense such as to muster. This fits in well with what it refers to, namely, forced labor or *sevel* which connotes bearing a burden compared with *mas* (conscriptio) as found in 9.21. *Sevel* pertains to the house of Joseph, Joseph being the one who had gained Pharaoh's favor and had brought his family to Egypt where they stayed for some four hundred years. Towards the end of this stay the Pharaoh afflicted the Israelites which led to their dramatic departure.

One day when Jeroboam left Jerusalem Ahijah who is called a prophet came across him on the road, vs. 29 saying that they were in open country or literally "alone in the field." Obviously this wasn't a chance encounter but one Ahijah was inspired to arrange, he being clothed in a new garment or *simlah*, usually a large outer piece of clothing. So there they were, two men on an isolated section of the road, Jeroboam not knowing if this man were a robber or the like. Without saying a word, Ahijah cuts this garment into twelve pieces. The number twelve was familiar to most people as pertaining to Israel's twelve tribes, so Jeroboam must have known it had political consequences.

Ahijah tells Jeroboam to take ten pieces of the garment, symbolic of the ten tribes over which he will rule, the other two along with the ten, not being described at this point (one tribe is Levi which has not territorial inheritance). And so the prophet leaves the choice up to Jeroboam, this in anticipation of the Lord about to tear the kingdom from Solomon. Actually Ahijah goes into some detail as to the prophecy related to what will happen, all the way through vs. 39. As for the verb to tear, it's *qarah* as noted in vs. 11 when the Lord is speaking to Solomon in reference to the yet to be identified servant. However, the Lord will leave the king one tribe (again, as yet to be identified) for the sake of David. Chances are when Solomon heard this he was enraged by the fact that the revolt is compounded by yet another reference to his father.

The reason for this division of Israel is obvious, that King Solomon worshiped foreign gods as a result of the foreign women with whom he consorted. Ahijah as mouthpiece of the Lord puts this in personal terms of Solomon having forsaken him, *hazav* as loosening bonds noted in 9.9. Such words imply the loosening of the covenant. As for *hazav*, it extends to the two verbs, *halak* and *hasah* (cf. vs. 5 and vs. 28 respectively) or to walk and to do. The former suggests going to a place, and upon having arrived, engage in activity. The English “keep” is absent in the Hebrew text. Walking is with respect to the following three: 1) The Lord’s ways (*derek*) whereas doing is with respect to what is right or *yashar* which connotes straightness. 2) Commandments (*choq*, cf. 9.6) and 3) statutes (*mishpat*, cf. 10.9). Such is the sorry state of affairs made worse by the renowned wisdom with which Solomon was endowed. Yet again, the Lord makes reference to David who maintained all three.

Vs. 34 has the conjunctive *v-* for “nevertheless” with respect to the Lord not taking the entire kingdom of Israel from Solomon. Instead, he will allow him to exercise his rule for the duration of his life, again for the sake of his father David. In other words, Solomon has to live out his life with this hanging over his head, never having the chance to come into his own despite his earlier reputation for wisdom. What’s personally galling is the Lord saying that David had kept (*shamar*, cf. vs. 10) his commandments and statutes, *mitsvah* and *choq* (cf. 9.6 and vs. 33 respectively). To Solomon there will be given one tribe (unspecified at this point) in order that David—yes David yet again—will have a lamp before the Lord in Jerusalem, *nyr* also as candle, this having three other biblical references. Implied is that this tribe will be present in the temple as a kind of sanctuary lamp.

In vs. 37 the Lord says to Jeroboam through the medium of Ahijah that he will reign over the ten kingdoms represented earlier by the prophet’s cut up garment or more specifically, he will rule over all that his soul desires, *nephesh* (cf. 8.48) and the verb *avah* which also means to lust after. The Lord continues to speak to Jeroboam in words he had done to Solomon, again walking in his statutes and commandments (*choq* and *mitsvah*, cf. vs. 34 for both) and, of course, with reference to David. And so observance or *shamar* (cf. vs. 34) of *choq* and *mitsvah* will result in the Lord building for Jeroboam a sure house (as with David) and giving Israel to him, *aman* (cf. 8.26) being the participle here, to be faithful, firm.

Vs. 39 contains the last words of Ahijah’s prophecy to Jeroboam, again with the conjunctive *v-*, where the Lord says that he won’t afflict (*hanah*, cf. 8.35) David’s descendants forever. In other words, this is the first time the Lord has modified Nathan’s prophecy quoted just above, a significant development. It’s even more significant insofar as Jeroboam is about to bring Israel down a path of rebellion that will change everything.

As for the prophet Ahijah and Jeroboam, all this occurred on an empty stretch of road somewhere outside Jerusalem (cf. vs. 29). Now the two men parted, Ahijah not being heard again until Chapter Fourteen and Jeroboam to overseeing the forced labor mentioned in vs. 28. Somehow, somewhere word leaked out about this meeting on the road and reached the ears of King Solomon. One possibility is that Jeroboam discussed the matter among his associates upon reaching those being forced to work. Once he heard this plot by the king, Jeroboam fled to the refuge of Egypt, and remained there until the death of Solomon.

Vs.s 41-43 or through the rest of Chapter Eleven mention the death of King Solomon. It's done in a rather matter-of-fact way, offering neither high praise because of his descent into darkness brought about by having a whole retinue of foreign women and more importantly, the influence of their gods upon him and through him upon Israel. In short, these gods made it all the more easier for the people to succumb to them instead of remaining faithful to the Lord. Vs. 41 is a rhetorical question in that the reader presumably knows about what King Solomon had done, his wisdom, etc., by consulting the "acts (*davar*) of Solomon." Then vs. 43 concludes with the simple but ominous words, "and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead."

1) 'ahav, nakry' 2) goy, lev, natah, 'aken, nashal, davaq, 'ahavah, 4) lev, shalem, 5) halak, 5) shiquts, 6) rah, male', 7) bamah, shiquts, 9) 'anaph, 10) shamar, 11) qarrah, heved, 14) qum, satan, 16) karath, 23) qum, 25) satan, quts, 26) qum, 28) gibor, chayl, hasah, mela'kah, paqad, sevel, 29) simlah, 31) qarrah, 33) hazav, halak, hasah, derek, yashar, choq, mishpat, 34) shamar, mitsvah, choq, 36) nyr, 37) nephesh, 'avah, 38) shamar, choq, mitsvah, 'aman, 39) hanah,

## Chapter Twelve

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated in the RSV and as it usually does, shows the close connection between events, King Solomon's death and the tragic ascension of King Rehoboam to the throne as his successor. Furthermore, it serves to show the already mentioned slide into chaos which continues in tragic fashion until the advent of the prophet Elijah. Even then the political situation doesn't improve but at least bottoms out for the rest of First Kings.

Rehoboam becomes king at the death of his father King Solomon with apparent little or no fanfare. It's as though the author of Kings wanted to put down the facts and have memory of him pass off the scene as quickly as possible. His formal installation takes place at Shechem, the chief town of the northern tribes with "all Israel" being present. Plenty of rumors must have swirled about as to Rehoboam's identity...why Solomon picked

him...and other sons didn't fit the bill although there's no mention of them. Given the amount of wives and concubines belonging to Solomon, you'd think a whole slew of sons would be in contention for the throne. Perhaps they were, that inconvenient fact being passed over.

Word of King Solomon's death reached Jeroboam who had fled into Egypt to escape his clutches meaning that there was some interval between his death and the ascension of his successor. The words "then Jeroboam returned from Egypt" are an understatement; better to say that he rushed home as quickly as possible, delighted at the news and the possibility of restoring credibility to the throne...he, of course, having in mind as being the next king. Also he went as Pharaoh's ears and eyes to keep watch on developments. As for this verse (i.e., 2), it reads literally "he dwelt in Egypt" instead of the RSV's "returned from Egypt."

Vs. 3 reads "they sent and called him" (literally 'to him'), that is, Jeroboam. This is different from vs. 2 where he got word in Egypt, so summoning him refers, for example, to him being within the borders of Israel. Jeroboam had been in charge of the forced labor of the house of Joseph (cf. 11.28). Despite his rush home and this summoning to Shekem, he must have had some fear and hesitancy because he had been a task master over the house of Joseph as noted in 11.28. In short, some among those calling him just might have revenge on their minds. It turned out that Jeroboam's well-founded doubts dissipated, for he and the entire assembly of Israel have their attention centered upon Rehoboam. *Qahal* (cf. 8.65) is used here suggesting that this was a formal event where the people were about to bring up a matter of national as well as religious interest. Compare use of *qahal* with "all Israel" in vs. 1.

Vs. 4 has this *qahal* speaking with Rehoboam, possible Jeroboam acting as their mouthpiece, rehearsing their request and debating over how to best present the way King Solomon had exerted his rule over Israel. That is to say, they claim his rule put in terms of a yoke (already heavy enough) as heavy, *qasheh* also as stubborn or heavy. Interestingly the verb "make" is absent from the original. The first words reads literally and tellingly as "your father hard our yoke." It's as though Solomon = the yoke. Chances are that Jesus had this in mind when in Mt 11.29 he calls his yoke easy and his burden light, *chrestos* and *elaphros*. The first adjective means manageable, fit or useful and the second, quick or agile.

The *qahal* continues with their request to have this lifted or lightened, *qalal* with the alternate meaning of to curse, cursing a kind of making light (cf. 2.8). The noun *havodah* means service, implying slavery. That must have been very difficult for Jeroboam to say because he had been in charge of the forced labor or *sevel* of 11.28 which connotes bearing

or carrying. In this same verse the adjective *kaved* (cf. 10.2) or heavy describes the yoke imposed by King Solomon, this countering *qesheh* or hard. Should Rehoboam comply, the *qahal* will serve him readily, *havad* (cf. 9.21) being the verb from which the just mentioned *havodah* is derived. In other words, the *havad* won't be a *havodah*.

The response to this carefully thought out proposal which seems so reasonable? Rehoboam tells the *qahal* to go away for three days and return. Just hearing this summarily put statement with no expression of sympathy was proof enough of his decision. The *qahal* did go away but with a sense of disappointment and fear for the future. Jeroboam knew this would provide him with a unique chance: either usurp the throne or break away and form a new kingdom, the latter eventually being the result.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” implying that indeed Rehoboam had made up his mind. Unfortunately an alternative never was in question. Although eager to give a response without wanting to wait three days, he was bound to do so for the sake of outward appearances. However, the three days afforded him opportunity to take counsel (*yahats*, cf. 1.12) with the elders, a more or less *pro forma* way of doing things. Actually these are the same men who had advised King Solomon which brings up the question whether they advised he imposed the hard service and heavy yoke or did so on his own. Possibly they did and had come to regret it. Regardless, this put them in a very awkward position. They came off with the diplomatic response of asking Rehoboam to be a servant or *heved* to the people who serves them, *heved* and *havad* (cf. 11.11 and *havad* (cf. vs. 4). Thus we see a frequency of the verbal root *havad* and derivatives from it early on in this new chapter because work vs. slavery is of chief concern at this juncture. In addition to this, the elders advised Rehoboam to *davar davar* or to speak good words. In response to this proper use of *davar*, the Israelites will be his servants...his *heved*...forever or literally, “all days.” They advised this in light of hard personal experience under King Solomon, of how he had subjected his people.

The elders' advice was, to be sure, sound and would go a long way for the people to restore their faith in the monarchy. However, the conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 8 translated as “but” may be taken as the decisive point in that Rehoboam forsook the elders' counsel, *hazav* (cf. 11.33) suggesting abandonment of it. Perhaps he didn't inform them outrightly in order to maintain appearances but simply dismissed them, they knowing full well his decision. Without missing a beat, Rehoboam sought the advice of those young men with whom he had been raised, some of whom may have been his brothers as a result of King Solomon's relationship with so many wives. Already they had been corrupted, that is, they had gone over to the false gods of their mothers and were primed to agree with their master who similarly had been corrupted. Note the difference between these young men and the elders. The former “stood before him” whereas the latter “had stood before

Solomon.” Implied is that the young men were ready and eager to follow Rehoboam whereas the elders, by reason of their association with King Solomon, were not...all this even before both groups uttered a word of advice.

The young men advised Rehoboam with the dramatic comparison of his finger being thicker than his father’s loins as well as beating the people with scorpions in place of whips. A lot of anger and resentment went into this advice which simply mirrored the mind of Rehoboam. In fact, even when he was speaking with the elders he was planning, if you will, to beat both them and the people with scorpions. So from Solomon’s long, drawn-out association with foreign women and their gods this is what Israel is destined to inherit, all, of course, to the chagrin of the elders whose lives were not on the line.

Vs. 12 speaks of the eventful day...the third day...when “all the people” (cf. vs. 1; i.e., *qahal* not used) assemble to meet Rehoboam. Then in vs. 13 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* he answered harshly or *qasheh*, the same word as in vs. 4, “heavy.” Even before he spoke the people could perceive this *qasheh* on his face. Clearly Rehoboam had rejected the elders’ counsel, *hazav* used again as in vs. 8 and proceeded to speak in accord with what the young men had advised. Chances are some of them were present, standing there in the background and even armed in case a riot ensued. Also some of the elders must have been present, being embarrassed by this charade in that it reminded them of when they had advised King Solomon to adopt a harsh rule such as forced labor, etc.

After having communicated his decision using the example of whips and scorpions as means to govern the people, surely Rehoboam anticipated a strong if not violent response. That’s why vs. 15 says that he didn’t hear the people but simply walked away accompanied by his young men. *Sabah* (only found here in the Bible) is the word for “turn of events,” It derives from the verbal root *savav* meaning to turn around which literally is “from the Lord” and reflects a similar *sabah* of Rehoboam from the people and the people from Rehoboam. It’s to fulfill the *davar* which the Lord had *davar*, *qum* (cf. 11.26) being the verb which fundamentally means to rise. One way of looking at it is that the *sabah* is rising from the Lord and results in a *davar*. Vs. 15 refers this *davar* to Ahijah as recounted in 11.31-39 when he prophesied to Jeroboam who interestingly isn’t mentioned at this critical meeting.

In vs. 16 the people first see and then hear (*raha* and *shamah*, cf. 10.4 and 10.6 respectively) before giving their response: seeing in the sense of grasping the gravity of the situation and hearing that Rehoboam spurned them. Next follows a kind of rhetorical question the people exclaimed both among themselves as well as in the presence of King Rehoboam. We don’t have his response, but up to this point he must have thought the people to be docile and therefore compliant, not realizing the violence and determination

manifest in their words. The people exclaimed that they have no portion in David, *cheleq* also as a lot. The same goes for inheritance or *nachalah* (cf. 8.53). After this declaration of rebellion someone—and it could be Jeroboam—shouts out that everyone must go for their own tents and abandon the house of David. Note the contrast between *ohel* and *bayth* or tents and house (cf. 8.65 and 10.12 respectively). The former suggests impermanence and the latter, stability, this reflective of what is happening to the kingdom being fractured before everyone’s eyes. Vs. 16 concludes with the fact that “Israel departed to their tents.” A similar situation happened with the disaffected tribe of Benjamin: “We have no portion in David, and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel” [2Sam 20.1]!

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 17 translates as “but” as applied to Rehoboam ruling over Israel—distinct from Israel which went to their own tents—who lived in the cities of Judah. These are places as opposed to the transitory nature of tents (reference to people of the northern tribes who had settled in Judah). And so everyone wasn’t onboard with the rebellion, some loyal to King Rehoboam and by that, to his father Solomon and David before him. Others perhaps decided simply to wait things out and see if the nation would indeed go the route of division as well as how long Rehoboam would last.

The new king’s next move was to implement his promise put in turns of whips and scorpions, that is to say, he sends who must be a very disliked fellow by the name of Adoram. He’s a taskmaster of the forced labor, *mas* being the word for both (cf. 9.21). This implies the forced labor that had been in place since Solomon’s time, Jeroboam fulfilling that role as noted in 11.28. However, as soon as Adoram showed his face, “all Israel” stoned him, the verb *ragam* intensified by the preposition *b-* or “in him” with added mention of stones...i.e., they stoned him with stones. Then by way of footnote we have “and he died,” words which make sure the deed was carried out. Also the rapid-fire use of the conjunctive *v-* which occurs three times in vs. 18 reveals the suddenness and fury that was unleashed against an agent of the king.

This stoning took place at Shekem, and once King Rehoboam got word of it, he fled to Jerusalem. *Amats* is the verb as used in conjunction with a chariot to show how dire things had become and more so, his fear and inability to confront the growing rebellion. This is noted in vs. 19 with the verb *pashah* meaning to fall away or to transgress. As for the rebellion, it’s still going on when Kings was written: “to this day.” Clearly Rehoboam had made the biggest miscalculation of his life and was now beginning to pay for it though in the end it didn’t cause him his life. The response to his flight is that “all Israel” summoned Jeroboam to the assembly, *hedah* (cf. 8.5) implying the giving of testimony compared with the more sacred nature of *qahal*. The phrase “all Israel” is used a second time in this verse pretty much for emphasis compared with Rehoboam as king over Judah

and Benjamin. As for the latter, the **RSV** notes that its “inclusion is editorial to support the idea that there were exactly ten tribes in the north and two in the south.”

With the prospect of civil war threatening to spread beyond control and Rehoboam having assembled an army, in vs. 22 the *davar* of the Lord came to Shemaiah. He comes on the scene for a brief moment and disappears suddenly. Despite his obscurity, he’s called a “man of God” chiefly responsible for preventing civil war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. This is stated clearly in vs. 24 where Shemaiah tells everyone to go home because kinsmen fighting kinsmen is so terrible and will weaken Israel. He puts it simply and expressively as “this thing is from me.” This *davar* of peace is what the Lord wants, not the *pashah* of vs. 19. People on both sides were disposed to hear the *davar* of the Lord, complied and returned home which vs. 24 is careful to put as “according to the *davar* of the Lord.”

Despite a tentative peace having been put in place, vs. 25 through the rest of the chapter puts in motion a series of events where Jeroboam leads the people into an apostasy worse than his former employer, King Solomon. Over his years of service to the king he must have fallen prey to false gods not all at once but little by little. Then one day he woke up and was fully converted to that cause, having the support of Solomon’s multitude of wives and concubines.

The very first act of Jeroboam was to built Shechem with the intent of dwelling there as well as constructing Penuel, the former first mentioned in vs. 1 and the latter (with an ironical twist) first mentioned in Gn 32.30: “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel saying ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.’” At this juncture nothing is said of his intent with regard to these two places. However, vs. 26 reveals what’s really on Jeroboam’s mind utters aloud what was in his heart (*lev*, cf. 11.4) after these two projects were complete. That is to say, he fears the people will get tired and return to offering sacrifices in the Lord’s house at Jerusalem...Jerusalem under the control of Rehoboam despite his threat to use whips and scorpions which, of course, he did carry out. Jeroboam does acknowledge the very real threat—and essentially this was his real motive—that the people will kill him.

Now what had laid dormant comes to light in vs. 28 where Jeroboam pretty much follows the example of Aaron in Ex 32+ by making two calves of gold. Note that before doing this he got some advice (*yahats*, cf. vs. 6). Could this be from the former wives and concubines of King Solomon in whose employment he had been? After all, they numbered in the hundreds (cf. 11.3), and some...even a handful...must have swayed Jeroboam. He proclaimed that the people have been going to Jerusalem long enough to offer sacrifices,

many being fleeced by the temple priests. Now with one golden calf in Bethel and the other in Dan, there was no need to put up with such abuse.

Everyone knew the story of Eli's two sons who had "no regard for the Lord" [1Sam 2.12] and abused their priesthood. Chances are erection of the two calves were well received by many. After all, Gibeon was a "great high place" already in operation as noted in 3.4. To rival, even flaunt, the most basic tenet of Israel's faith, Jeroboam exclaimed in vs. 28, "Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up of the land of Egypt." Such words are literally a copy of Ex 32.4 in reference to the above noted golden calf fashioned by Aaron: "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

Vs. 30 says in a matter-of-fact way that this thing or this *davar* which, of course, is an utterance, which became a sin or *chata'th* (cf. 8.35) by reason of the people frequenting both calves or one in Bethel and the other in Dan. As for Bethel which translates as "House of God," it's the first place where Abram had built an altar (cf. Gn 12.8), so to have it defined is an especially egregious sin. Then again, most people didn't care. They were more engrossed with the more elaborate, even spectacular forms of worship they craved. Now this was unleashed and given full rein. Rehoboam also did the following which were considered abominations:

- 1) He appointed priests who weren't Levites to become stationed at such places of worship.
- 2) Appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month to offer sacrifices.
- 3) Appointed priests in Bethel.
- 4) He took it upon himself to offer sacrifices in Bethel on a specific date.
- 5) Ordained a feast or *chag* (cf. 8.65) for the people and on it burned incense.

The concluding words of vs. 33 sum up the apostasy now given official approval. With regard to an altar in Bethel Rehoboam "devised alone" a month of his choosing, *bada'* being the verb also meaning to feign. Such arrogance is amplified by the phrase "in his heart or *lev* (cf. vs. 26). Neh 6.8 has the only other biblical reference to this verb, so it's quoted here: "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind."

3) qahal, 4) qasheh, qalal, havodah, kaved, havad, 6) yahats, 7) heved, havad, heved, 8) hazav, 13) qasheh, hazav, 15) sabah, qum, 16) rahah, shamah, cheleq, 'ohel, bayth, 18) mas, ragam, 'amats, 19) pashah, 20) hedah, 26) lev, 28) yahats, 30) chata'th, 33) chag, lev, bada'

## Chapter Thirteen

The conjunctive *v-* as “and” begins this new chapter, doing what it’s designed to do as pointed out so frequently, to make a close connection between events or in this instance, a continuation of the saga of Jeroboam. This time the conjunctive is re-enforced with *hineh* or “behold” which serves to draw then capture the reader’s attention to the abominable practices initiated by King Jeroboam which he instituted to offset worship of the Lord in the Jerusalem temple. He’s making a twofold play here. First, to unite the people in a form of worship that will reflect their new identity after having broken off from Juda under King Rehoboam’s rule with whips and scorpions as noted first in 12.11. Second, he gives into the people’s undying penchant for worship of divinities native to Canaan, an affliction that will continue well into the future. It sounds attractive on paper but a different story when put into practice or better, after it has been implemented for a while.

*Vhineh* or “and behold” as noted above serves to introduce a “man of God” (*ysh ‘Elohyim*) whose identity is all the more mysterious because he remains anonymous. Actually the bulk of this chapter centers around him and another unnamed prophet who comes on the scene as if preparing us for the introduction of Elijah. However, as the story unfolds, one turns out to have lied and pays for it with his life.

The same title “man of God” is used for Shemaiah in 12.22. Note that this man comes from Judah, a sign that the two kingdoms aren’t meant to be divided. Also his anonymity might be a way of protecting him from any recrimination from either or both kingdoms. As for this man’s coming from Judah, it’s effected by the *davar* of the Lord. The text reads literally “in (*b-*) the *davar* of the Lord” implying that he never left this *davar* and remains within it. Bethel is his destination, the sacred place where Abram had built an altar noted in the last chapter and where Jeroboam had placed priests “of the high places” [12.32].

When this man of God arrived in Bethel he headed straight for the altar—perhaps on the “fifteenth day in the eighth month which he (Jeroboam) had devised of his own heart” [12.33]—and found the king happily engaged in burning incense. There’s no mention of anyone else present although he may have been accompanied by some of those newly appointed priests (cf. vs. 4). Interestingly this man (a prophet, though he isn’t called such but may be labeled one) doesn’t approach Jeroboam but the altar and cries against it, *qara’* with the preposition *hal-*, literally “upon.” It’s all the more dramatic in that he does so “in (*b-*) the *davar* of the Lord.” As noted in vs. 1, already he is in this *davar* so here he’s simply extending the *davar* out from himself to or upon the altar.

The crying or *qara’* (it also means to call out) is a direct address to the altar to get its attention although it were alive. Obviously the altar doesn’t respond, let alone King Jeroboam who isn’t mentioned until vs. 4. However, he was present as noted in vs. 4.

*Hineh* introduces the prophet's words followed immediately by the fact that Josiah will be born to the house of David, he as yet to be identified though of royal stock which implies King Solomon. Once king, Josiah will sacrifice the priests whom Jeroboam installed, again, those "of the high places" [12.32]. Not only that, "men's bones" shall be burned upon the altar, presumably the priests, their associates and even worshipers.

After the man of God cried out to the altar (*qara'* implying a loud voice), vs. 3 has him giving a sign that same day which suggests that he may have given the *mopheth* at time separately from his *qara'*. This noun means a miracle or prodigy usually announced as is the case at hand. "See that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles which I have put in your power" [Ex 4.21]. Note that this *mopheth* is one which the Lord himself has spoken (*davar*), that *davar* again coming from the man of God who is in the *davar* as noted above.

As for the contents of this sign, vs. 4 says that the altar will be torn down or *qarah* (cf. 11.31) after priests and men's bones have been burned upon it as noted in vs. 2. Nothing is said as to when this will happen, the threat intended to put King Jeroboam on notice. Indeed it did, for vs. 5 has him hearing of the prophet's "saying" or *davar*, standing right there at the altar. Perhaps he was still in the act of offering incense, too stunned to grasp what was going on. Then suddenly he stretched (*shalach*, cf. 9.7) out his hand toward the man of God as if to grasp him while commanding those nearby to lay hold of him, *taphats*. "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; or if they have come out for war, take them alive" [20.18]. However, at once King Jeroboam's hand withered away, and he was unable to draw it back. Thus he's standing there practically without an arm while the altar was torn down. Nothing is said as to those responsible for it, perhaps some who had accompanied the man of God or those who were duped by King Jeroboam and now have turned against him. The same applies to his hand which despite being restored, fulfills the words of vs. 34: "And this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth."

In vs. 6 King Jeroboam changes his mind, asking (the verb *hanah*, to answer is used) the man of God both to entreat and to pray for him, *chalah* (another meaning which is to be sick) and *palal* (cf. 8.54). "And Moses besought the Lord" [Ex 32.11]. Both passages read literally as "the face (*panym*) of the Lord." King Jeroboam's request is put in terms of the Lord associated with the man of God, that is, "the Lord your God" which is distinct from the supposed deity. As a result of the king's request, the prophet entreated the Lord, second mention of *chalah* with the phrase "the face (*panym*) of the Lord."

Obviously King Jeroboam was both grateful and wanting to return the favor despite his threat to kill the man of God. After all, if he tried laying hands on him a second time, Jeroboam might end up with more than one withered hand. And so he extends an

invitation to come to his home (actually, palace) and refresh himself, *sahad* fundamentally as to prop up, to support. “Hold me up that I may be safe and have regard for your statutes continually” [Ps 119.117]! The man of God responds brusquely and truthfully, not fearing reprisal by saying no to this invitation. After all, just a few minutes ago the king tried to kill him, so he replies by appealing to a higher authority—the highest, in fact—that he is ordered (*tsava*’, cf. 5.6) by the *davar* of the Lord (literally, ‘in or *b-* the *davar* of the Lord’) as in 13.1. Furthermore, the man of God isn’t to return to Judah the same way he had come to Bethel, this echoing the wise men who had come to see the newly born Christ when they were dealing with King Herod (cf. Lk 2.16). Such was this dramatic encounter with King Jeroboam whose response isn’t given. He figured that since the northern and southern kingdoms were divided recently, no need to aggravate the situation at least for now.

Vs. 11 introduces another anonymous person described as an “old prophet” who lived in Bethel, presumably prior to the kingdom being split up. His sons (the Hebrew text reads ‘son’) informed him of what the man of God had done, news of this dramatic event spreading quickly. Despite his age, this prophet saddled his ass and rode off to meet him. Even though the man of God must have kept his return route to Judah a secret, the prophet was able to divine it and catch up with him. The two finally met under an oak along the way, and the prophet invited the man of God to stay with him, but he refused. Words such as “in this place” in vs. 16 show his contempt for the newly broken off northern kingdom. In his mind, the old prophet is one who had abandoned the Lord and had gone over to worship of alien gods under Jeroboam. The man of God recounts the *davar* of the Lord saying that he’s forbidden to remain in Bethel but leave at once. Thus the presence of this divine *davar* determines whether one is for or against the Lord. Next the prophet reminds his guest that the two are in fact prophets; supposedly an angel of the Lord had *davar* to him by the *davar* of the Lord, this focus upon *davar* being what’s common and special between the two men.

Insertion of the short sentence in vs. 18 is telling, “But he lied to him.” That is to say, the old prophet had lied to the man of God, but at this point he was uncertain as to his true identity. Indeed, returning to Bethel was dangerous, given what had just happened to King Jeroboam. Were the two in cahoots? Such thought must have preoccupied the man of God. And so the dialogue between the prophet and man of God continues shrouded with uncertainty and tension as to who is genuine and who isn’t.

Finally in vs. 21 the *davar* of the Lord came to the old prophet. It did more than just come but enabled him to cry out (*qara*’, cf. vs. 2) that the man of God had failed in two ways. In sum, we’re getting closer as to who is the genuine prophet. Two factors are involved. The first is that the man of God had disobeyed the word of the Lord. The verb is *marah* which

is more along the lines of rebelling. It's used with *peh* or mouth, not *davar*, suggesting the source of this *davar* which is so important to a discerning the nature of a true prophet. The second is that he hadn't kept the divine commandment given him, *shamar* and *mitsvah* (cf. 11.38 for both). Note the stress not just upon *mitsvah* but it has been *tsavah* (cf. 2.1) or commanded, the noun's verbal root.

After the old prophet had further shamed the man of God by bouncing back to him his own words about not eating nor drinking in Bethel, the conversation ends abruptly. The prophet saddles the ass of his guest in complete silence while the man of God looks on in dismay and sent him off without any further ado or exchange of words. It so happened that en route back to Judah the man of God was attacked by a lion. Passers by discovered the lion sitting by the corpse, another injury to insult, as if the lion refused to eat something unclean. At once the old prophet went with his sons (plural, unlike the singular of vs. 11) and found the lion still there. They removed the body and buried it in the grave of the prophet—and that must mean in Bethel, not the man of God's Judah—after which all engaged in mourning, the prophet even calling the dead man “my brother” in vs. 30.

The end of this rather complex story has the old prophet asking his sons to bury him next to the man of God. Despite the conflict between the two, the prophet recognized the man of God as having taken a stance against King Jeroboam, something possibly he had regretted as not having done. The dead man did cry out or *qara'* again a saying or a *davar* of the Lord against (literally 'upon,' *hal-*; cf. vs. 2) the altar. Included were all houses of the high places (*bamah*, cf. 11.7) in Samaria, these destined to be fulfilled. In sum, it could be said that the man of God and the old prophet represent the two split tribes. Now the old prophet could wait out his days knowing that despite this split, worship of the true God will win out.

Word invariably got back to Jeroboam that the man of God and most likely his other nemesis, the old prophet, had passed away, such being the sense of vs. 33, “after this thing” or “after this *davar*.” And so there remained the single grave with two men of God representing the split kingdom of Israel, a reminder for future generations. The king persisted in his evil ways despite the dramatic episode of the altar being destroyed and his hand having dried up and later restored. He made priests from among the people. That is to say, he didn't take them from the tribe of Levi, the true priestly class in Israel. Such stubbornness reflected in Jeroboam, symptomatic for just about all Israelites, makes you pause and reflect more deeply upon the strength of this penchant for worship of alien gods really is. While stated frequently, at the same time no one seems strong or insightful enough to deal with it head on.

As a result, this thing (*davar*) turned into a sin for the house of Jeroboam which in part is the house of David, Rehoboam being the other part. King Jeroboam persisted in it for an

extended period of time which at this point isn't revealed but left that way so as to keep up the suspense. Regardless, his house is destined to be cut off and destroyed, *kachad* and *samad*. The former also means to deny, to disown and to hide while the latter means to be laid waste. Ps 83.4: "They say, 'Come, let us wipe them out as a nation.'" "He (Baasha) killed all the house of Jeroboam; he left to the house of Jeroboam not one that breathed until he had destroyed it" [15.29].

1) *hineh*, 2) *qara'*, *hineh*, 3) *mopheth*, 4) *qarah*, *shalach*, *taphats*, 6) *hanah* (cf. 11.39 with the alternate meaning to afflict), *chalah*, *palal*, *chalah*, 7) *sahad*, 9) *tsava'*, 21) *qara'*, *marah*, *peh*, *shamar*, *mitsvah*, *tsavah*, 32) *qara'*, *bamah*, 33) *kachad*, *samad*

## Chapter Fourteen

*Baheth* or "at that time" takes the place of the familiar conjunctive *v-* beginning a new chapter. It's close in meaning by reason of showing the practically simultaneous occurrence of what just transpired and the story about to unfold. *Baheth* introduces the son of Jeroboam, Abijah, who fell ill, *chalah* (cf. 13.5 with another meaning of this verb) also as to be weak or exhausted. Apparently Abijah is relatively young which compels the king to seek a cure all the more. Actually he's called a *nahar* or child in vs. 3. Jeroboam does this by asking his wife whose name remains anonymous, this fitting in well with Jeroboam wanting to conceal her identity from Ahijah. Just to make sure, he bids her to conceal her identity, *shanah* also as to change or to repeat as in 18.34: "Do it a second time." Most likely his wife donned the clothes of a common peasant so as not to attract attention as well as making the journey without a bodyguard or servants, a risky proposition for a woman.

And so this woman...presumably a queen being her official title...headed off to Shiloh to meet the prophet Ahijah who had confronted Jeroboam on the road when he foretold the dividing of Israel, this prompting King Solomon to seek his death (cf. 11.29+). Before leaving, Jeroboam tries to sooth her with Ahijah having told him that he'd be king. In addition to this, she's to bring what amounts to a modest gift of bread and honey. After all Ahijah is a prophet living a rather Spartan existence who wouldn't be insulted.

She followed her husband's wish and arose, the verb *qum* (cf. 12.15) as in vs. 1 indicative of her willingness to leave in a moment's notice. After all, it's a matter of life and death for their son. Once in Shiloh she came to Ahijah's house, approaching it with a mixture of dread and urgency. By now the prophet had become quite old and was unable to see which must have relieved the woman...falsely as it turns out. The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 5 ('and') shows the close connection between the woman's intent to inquire (*darash*) and the

Lord speaking to Ahijah who informs him of her identity beginning with *hineh* or “behold.” The verb *darash* fundamentally means to tread, this fitting in well with the woman’s desperation. “There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord.” In the verse at hand *darash* is used with *davar*...literally as “to inquire a word” of Ahijah. As for *davar*, the Lord bids the prophet to *davar* in a way that’s appropriate and which won’t be revealed until the two actually meet.

Vs. 5 continues with a second sentence saying that King Jeroboam’s wife pretended to be another woman, *nakar* noted in 8.41 as a verbal root. Also it means to alienate as well as to acknowledge. Despite being completely blind, Ahijah recognized her immediately as soon as he heard the sound of her feet, this because he was informed by the Lord (*davar* not mentioned but presumed). Ahijah gets right to the point saying that he’s charged with some grievous tidings, the verb *shalach* (cf. 13.4) meaning to be sent along with the adjective *qasheh* (cf. 12.13) being used which also means hard as well as heavy. Also the preposition ‘*el-*’ is prefaced to “you” reading literally as “to you” which makes the threatening heaviness all the more burdensome just by his words.

Vs. 7 has Ahijah speaking with the woman, the familiar “thus says the Lord” as he had done on the road (cf. 11.31) and continues through vs. 11. It might seem a lot for him to remember but then again, it comes from the Lord which is a wholly different way of retaining any *davar* he has uttered. She has no choice but to listen and impart the Lord’s words to her husband, starting with him having been divinely chosen. This is put as having been exalted (*rum*; cf. 11.27 for another use but not noted there) from among the people, *betok* (cf. 6.13) suggesting from their very center or middle. Such *rum* is synonymous with *nagyed* (cf. 1.35 but not noted there) or being a leader, this term usually associated with a prince. Thus *rum* and *nagyed* are opposite to *qarah* or tearing as in 11.31 with regard the symbolic meaning of Ahijah’s new garment.

The second half of vs. 8 has the conjunctive *v-* translated more forcefully as “and yet,” words that frightened Jeroboam’s wife and will do the same to him because they introduce what the Lord is really after which by no means is favorable. As with King Solomon before him, the Lord is to tell Jeroboam that he is being compared with David who had kept (*shamar*) the divine commandments or *mitsvah* (for both, cf. 13.21), followed the Lord with his whole heart (*halak* and *lev*, cf. 11.31 and 12.33 respectively) and had done what was right (*yashar*, cf. 11.33) in his eyes.

The conjunctive *v-* introducing vs. 9 is comparable to that of vs. 8 just mentioned in that it introduces damning evidence against King Jeroboam. That is to say, the evil (*rah*, cf. 11.6) he committed was beyond his two predecessors on the throne. Chief among such *rah* is having made both other gods and molten images or *masekah*, gods made of some kind of

metal similar to the gold calf fashioned by Aaron: “And he received the gold at their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a molten calf” [Ex 32.4]. As was the case then, Jeroboam’s actions had angered the Lord, *kahas* meaning to irritate or provoke. “Provoking me to anger with their sins” [16.2]. Similarly or worse, he had cast the Lord behind his back implying that at the same time he faced these images. Something similar is recorded in Neh 9.26: “Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets.”

Vs. 10 comes off with the Lord’s decision introduced in a both formal and threatening fashion as “therefore behold” (*hineh*). It consists of the following three parts:

1) To bring evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 9) literally “to (*‘el-*) the house of Jeroboam,” this being a direct way of putting it.

2) Cut off or *karath* (cf. 11.16) every male from Jeroboam’s house which usually involves an extended family consisting of officials, etc. “Male” is rendered colorfully and in a derogatory fashion as “him who pisses against the wall.”

3) Will utterly consume Jeroboam’s house, this presumably after having cut off everyone “who pisses against the wall.” *Bahar* is the verb meaning to consume with fire and resembles 21.21: “I will utterly sweep you away and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond of free, in Israel.” To make this even worse, such *bahar* will be like burning dung.

After having taken care of Jeroboam and his house, the Lord doesn’t stop there. Anyone belonging in the city—presumably Tirzah as in vs. 17—will be eaten by dogs. A similar fate awaits those in the countryside; they will be eaten by birds. And so this prophecy uttered by Ahijah to Jeroboam’s wife about restoring health to their child comes to an end leaving the woman at a loss for words. She arrived expecting a miracle and goes away with a promise of an impending destruction that will be complete. Vs. 11 concludes with the far from consoling “the Lord has *davar* it.”

The prophet continues speaking but not as mouthpiece of the Lord through vs. 16 telling the woman first to arise and then return home, *qum* in the opposite manner her husband Jeroboam asked in vs. 2. As soon as she returns there, the sound of her very feet will make her son Abijah die, this reminiscent of Peter’s words to Sapphira: “Hark, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out” [Acts 5.9]. Later in vs. 17 when she sets out to Tirzah one can only imagine her thoughts along the way. She had come on her own unaccompanied which made the trip all the worse, perhaps tarrying along the way as much as she could so her son could live.

In vs. 13 the entire nation of Israel...northern and southern kingdoms...will mourn for the recently deceased Abijah, the verb being *saphad* (cf. 13.29 but not noted there) or to sing mournful songs. Although unknown to everyone, this child represented the possibility of a

reconciliation between the two kingdoms. With this in mind, the utter contempt shown by the Lord as being pleased by the child's death is indeed disturbing. The words of vs. 13 "in him there is found something pleasing to the Lord" are rendered literally as "because it was found in him a good *davar* to the Lord." So when the Lord sets him mind to do something, he's ruthless about it.

To resolve the situation concerning both Jeroboam's apostasy and the divided kingdoms in vs. 14, Ahijah continues with the Lord saying to his wife that he will raise up a new king, the verb *qum* with the added *lu* or "to himself" or a king who will be the Lord's personal possession. Apparently this new king who remains anonymous is a fully grown man because the verse says that today (*hayom*) he will cut off (*karath*, cf. vs. 10) the house of Jeroboam. So once this new king is installed and Jeroboam is out of the way, the Lord will smite Israel, *nakah* (also as to strike) which comes true in the words of 15.29: "And as soon as he (Baasha) was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam."

In vs. 14 this *nakah* is synonymous with uprooting Israel, *natash* (cf. 8.57)...not just that but from a land that's good, *adamah* (cf. 9.7) being the noun which applies more to earth or soil with the preposition *mehal*, literally as "from upon." Dt 1.25 has a reference to this land but uses *erets*, land more along the lines of territory compared with the physical land though that can apply as well: "And they (spies sent by Joshua into Canaan) took in their hands some of the fruit of the land and brought it down to us and brought us word again, and said, 'It is a good land which the Lord our God gives us.'" As for this *natash* or uprooting, it will mean that the people will go into exile beyond the Euphrates River; at least it doesn't mean their destruction.

The reason is more obvious, getting back to Jeroboam's apostasy: the people have made (*hasah*, cf. 11.33) Asherim which a footnote in the RSV describes as "wooden poles, symbols of the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah...as a temptation to the Israelites." Emphasis upon *hasah* suggests the same making or fashioning that Aaron had done with the golden calf mentioned earlier. As for the prohibition against Asherim, cf. Dt 12.3: "You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire." The prophet Ahijah concludes his harsh words to the (queen) wife of Jeroboam with mention of the king's sins, the noun and verb mentioned together for greater affect and again the verb with regard to Israel.

Vs. 17 begins with a momentous conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" with regard to Jeroboam's wife leaving Ahijah and making that journey back home alone with full knowledge of what was about to happen. *Qum* (cf. vs. 14) is used again as "arise," something she could barely do. The suddenness of it all rings true with her not simply entering her house and before greeting Jeroboam but her feet touching the threshold.

Chances are as she got close to home she removed her disguise (cf. vs. 5) so as to be recognized. Once those on the other side of the ill-fated threshold caught sight of her, including a nurse or maid most likely holding little Abijah, knew something was up just by the expression on her face. Once inside over the threshold and an instant before her son's death, she must have wished not to have returned home but stay away even if it meant for the rest of her life.

Regardless of hindsight, the entire nation of Israel mourned for Abijah, *saphad* used again as in vs. 13, this in accord with the *davar* of the Lord which came through the prophet Ahijah. Jeroboam was devastated, knowing full well that he had jeopardized both his wife and child. Nevertheless, he doesn't seem to have been moved by this *davar* of the Lord, for vs. 19 presents him moving on pretty much as nothing had happened. This verse begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now" with regard to the remaining deeds or *davar* of Jeroboam being recorded in a register dealing with the kings of Israel. Despite Jeroboam veering off into apostasy and favoring high places, he reigns for twenty-two years, a fact that must have galled Ahijah exceedingly despite him prophesying the death of Abijah. As for his wife, we have no further information although his son Nadab ruled in his place meaning that the couple had more than one child.

Vs. 21 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now" and shows a shift from the tragedy of both Jeroboam's son and wife to Rehoboam who is called specifically Solomon's son. It turned out that he, along with King Jeroboam, lived longer than expected, given the division of the kingdom into two. Apparently any attempts at assassination were prevented. As for Rehoboam, he lasted seventeen years...seventeen years of ruling with whips and scorpions according to 12.11. Vs. 21 also points out the importance of Jerusalem with regard to the Lord, thereby intimating the fate of the northern kingdom. That is to say, the Lord himself had chosen Jerusalem as the place to put his name. Without mentioning it, this infers the temple built by King Solomon.

We have what appears as a passing mention of King Rehoboam's mother, Naamah. More importantly, she's an Ammonitess suggesting that she is one of the multitude of wives associated with King Solomon. That, in turn, leads to the fact that she had a role in turning away his heart (cf. 11.3) from worship of the Lord to native Canaanite divinities. And so one verse contains Jerusalem (i.e., the temple) and the infamous high places noted in vs. 23. The profusion of the latter comes out more strongly by addition of pillars and Asherim (cf. vs. 16). Mention of them being on every high hill and under every green tree gives the impression of a full invasion or take-over of Israel; more specifically, it's a re-possession of the land and the alien invaders (the Israelites) now living upon it, having converted these invaders. One more insult-to-injury: male prostitutes (for a prohibition, cf. Dt 23.17) are added and acted in accord with abominations from other countries. This is the only use of

*tohevah* in First Kings; Second Kings has two (16.3 and 21.2), the first being quoted here, close to the verse at hand: “He even burned his son as an offering according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.” So despite specific mention of the Lord having driven these abominable practice out (*garash*, cf. 2.27), they sprung up just as quickly and resiliently as ever.

Vs. 25 has Shishak of Egypt invading Jerusalem, that is, not long after King Rehoboam was on the throne. The concluding words of vs. 26 sums it up pretty well: “he took away everything” but doesn’t seem to have laid waste to the city. This had weakened the nation put in terms of Rehoboam having made shields of bronze to replace to stolen ones of God made by King Solomon. In sum, it’s a way of describing the ever increasing difficulty between Rehoboam and his rival Jeroboam which vs. 30 puts literally “all the days” for continually. A final dig at Rehoboam and Judah doing “what was evil in the sight of the Lord” [vs. 22] is mention of his mother Naamah the Ammonitess. Translation? The continuation of the abominations in conflict with worship of the Lord.

1) chalah, 2) shanah, 4) qum, 5) hineh, darash, nakar, 6) shalach, qasheh, 7) rum, betok, 8) qarah, shamar, mitsvah, halak, lev, yashar, 9) rah, masekah, kahas, 10) hineh, rah, karath, bahar, 12) qum, 13) saphad, 14) qum, karath, natash, ‘adamah, 15) hasah, 17) qum, 18) saphad, 24) tohevah, garash

## Chapter Fifteen

By now we’ve gone through four kings, David, Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, the latter two pretty much taken together because they reigned simultaneously. All in all they span three generations of Israelites, all within living memory. Although this royal lineage began with David, the kingship actually was instituted with Saul. He’s not even mentioned in First and Second Kings, but surely the memory of his descent into madness was in the forefront of many people. It remained underground and unfortunately turned out to be a not inaccurate model for some kings who followed. Now in the present chapter as well as the next we follow the succession of further, lesser known monarchs, each of whom is sized up in terms of doing either evil or good in the sight (eyes) of the Lord.

As a reminder, this descent into the chaos of two kingdoms and successive kings and wars results from the prophet Nathan’s curse levied against David for arranging the death of Uriah and taking his wife Bathsheba: “Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife” [2Sam 12.10]. Indeed this verse is more than a reminder...it’s more a summary of First and Second Kings. However, both the chapter at hand and the one that

follows give a sense, albeit not clear yet, that something has to give. Movements in that direction were made through a lesser prophet here and there whose roles are preparatory stages for the emergence of Elijah and Elisha. They will dominate much of the remainder of First Kings and spill over into Second Kings.

Chapter Fifteen begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” to show the continued albeit depressing account of the two divided kingdoms. With regard to King Jeroboam, his son Abijam took over. Vs. 3 describes him as walking in “all the sins which his father did” which means following in his footsteps. Similarly his heart (*lev*, cf. 14.8) wasn’t “wholly true to the Lord,” the adjective *shalem* (cf. 11.4; related to *shalom*) being used. If this weren’t bad enough, Abijam is compared to the gold standard, King David, whose heart was such although *shalem* isn’t applied to him directly.

In vs. 4 David is mentioned in the context of a lamp being set in Jerusalem, *nyr* (cf 11.36) also as a candle which signifies presence. This *nyr* carries over to David’s son Solomon though not mentioned here possibly out of embarrassment of more recent events that brought about the division between two kingdoms. In fact this son is credited with having established Jerusalem, *hamad* (cf 8.11) being the verb which fundamentally means to stand in a permanent sense compared with *qum* which one might expect in this context.

In vs. 5 this *hamad* or constancy with regard to Jerusalem ties in with King David by reason of him having done what is right (*yashar*) in the eyes of the Lord as stated in 14.8. Then we come across a rather unexpected caveat, if you will. After noting that David didn’t turn aside (*sur*) from what the Lord had commanded (*tsava’*, cf. 13.9) him, vs. 14 uses *sur* in the opposite sense. That is to say, “the high places were not taken away.” The verse at hand mentions the matter central to all the distress and trouble being recounted, namely, the “matter (*davar*) of Uriah” which is brought up so often in these notations. Actually it gives good perspective on all these depressing accounts of misrule and apostasy before we encounter the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

Vs. 6 is yet another bearing-out of the Uriah tragedy prophesied by Nathan, namely, that war existed between Rehoboam and Jeroboam throughout “his life,” this referring to Jeroboam as in vs. 1. As for King Abijam, he lacks mention of what now has become the criterion of having done good or evil in the eyes of the Lord. He’s brushed aside as quickly as possible that we may move on.

Next in line comes Asa who reigned a whopping forty-one years in Jerusalem, he being credited right away with having done right in the Lord’s eyes, *yashar* (cf. vs. 5) and, of course, being compared with King David. Such *yashar* takes the form of putting away cult prostitutes and idols, *qadesh* and *gilulym*. The former is related closely to the adjective

meaning holy or set apart and has two other references in First Kings, 14.24 and 22.46. As for the latter, cf. 21.26: “He (Ahab) did very abominably in going after idols as the Amorites had done.” Note that both the *qadesh* and *gilulym* are associated with “his fathers” as had been mentioned earlier and are significant insofar as King Asa put a break on these practices. Given the propensity of Israel toward apostasy, we can count on it making a come back.

Next Asa makes a bold move. He removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother or *gevyrah*, a noun found in 11.19. It’s bold in that such a woman traditionally plays the role of a power broker behind the scenes; invisible yet controlling most of what’s going on which involves appointments and setting policy. Just the term “queen mother” evokes an aura of mystery and intrigue. As for King Asa, he removed Maach because of her affinity for an abominable image or *mipletseth* in honor of Asherah, a Canaanite goddess for whom Asherim were made as noted in 14.15. He went at it with full zeal, first cutting it down and then burning it in the Kidron Brook for all to behold and to take warning. Nevertheless, the high places or *bamah* noted in 13.32 remained. This proves that totally uprooting idol worship native to Canaan was a Mission Impossible task. In fact, not long afterwards King Ahab made an Asherah as recounted in 16.33. Despite Asa’s valiant efforts his heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 3) remained literally “with (*him-*) the Lord” throughout his life. His noble effort at maintaining true worship of the Lord concludes with him bringing into the temple both his father’s votive gifts and his own, the word being *qodesh* or that which is holy (cf. 8.10). The *qodesh* of his father Jeroboam most likely belonged to Canaanite deities whereas those of Asa belonged to the Lord. Hopefully by placing the two together the latter would win out, symbolically to start off with, and hopefully with time a standard.

Vs. 16 pretty much sums up the hostile state of affairs that has existed for some time, that is, between the division of the two kingdoms. Also the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” contributes a sense of weariness of this constant warfare. Actually it’s more a state of hostility than an open confrontation of armies. *Milchamah* (cf. 8.44) is the noun for war, more or less a general term. The situation at hand involves kings Asa and Baasha, Judah and Israel respectively. It devolves further and further in accord with what had been said so often in this document, a tragic spin-off of Nathan’s prophecy. Actually it seems destined to last as long as the monarchy.

Syria is dragged into the strife by Asa until his son Jehoshaphat took over along with Nadab in Israel. While nothing is said as to summing up the former except for having diseased feet, the latter is singled out for having done evil in the Lord’s sight as well as having been no better than his father. If this weren’t bad enough, vs. 26 puts it tersely that in addition to having walked in his father’s evil ways, “in his sin which made Israel to sin.”

In other words, the initial sin of King David spread far beyond the monarchy and infected the entire nation or nations...Judah and Israel.

And so on and on it goes from vs. 27 to the completion of this chapter as well as beyond. The infectious nature of sin continues with Baasha killing the entire house of Jeroboam which is put vividly as not leaving one breathing person alive, the noun being *neshamah*. While the hostility noted above with regard to vs. 16 continues to devolve, one constant remains, that being the *davar* of the Lord ('according to the *davar* of the Lord'). If it weren't present, chances are we'd see the annihilation of the people or worse, being subsumed by the Canaanite deities.

As for this *davar*, it was given by Ahijah in 14.10-11: "for the Lord has *davar* it." Again Jeroboam's sin is brought up in vs. 30 or more specifically, for having provoked the Lord, *kahas* (cf. 14.11).

As expected with regard to King Baasha, Chapter Fifteen concludes with him having committed evil in the Lord's eyes, walked in the ways of Jeroboam and sadly, caused Israel to sin. Now the final act of what had been laid out is set for the next chapter before the appearance of Elijah, one of or if not, the most famous prophet of them all.

3) lev, shalem, 4) nyr, hamad, 5) yashar, sur, tsava', 9) yashar, qadesh, gilulyim, 13) gevyrah, mipletseth, 14) bamah, lev, 15) qodesh, 16) milchamah, 29) neshamah, 30) kahas

## Chapter Sixteen

As for the conjunctive *v*- beginning this new chapter, aptly it's translated as "and," by that meaning yet more of the dreary state of affairs that had preceded it. In fact, the conjunctive helps us get through what remains to be done as quickly as possible. At this point what sustains us is knowledge that the prophets Elijah and Elisha are about to make their appearance. The downside, however, is King Ahab whom as vs. 33 says is the worse monarch to come along. In addition we have his ruthless wife Jezebel.

Vs. 1 has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jehu against (*hal*-, literally 'upon') Baasha with the expected condemnation lasting through vs. 5. The *davar* is given in a prophetic fashion; we don't know that Jehu was such until vs. 7. Baasha must have known of Jehu, that he was prone to divine inspiration, and either summoned him for an audience or given the boldness of prophets, Jehu may have walked right into the royal court demanding to see the king. Any royal official would be hard pressed to deny someone with prophetic capabilities whether they were favorable or unfavorable to their master.

*Rum* (cf. 14.9) is the verb for exalted in vs. 2 with regard to Baasha whom the Lord brings from dust or *haphar* which signifies dryness or barrenness all the way up to king or leader, *nagyd* being a general word usually applied to a prince (cf. 1.35 but not noted there). Despite this exaltation Baasha has walked in the way (*derek*, cf. 11.33) of his predecessor, Jeroboam. So it turns out that Jeroboam has become a template for everything a king shouldn't do. Vs. 2 echoes the words of 15.30 causing Israel to fall into sinful ways while at the same time he's provoking the Lord, *kahas* (cf. 15.30). The result of this is predicable, almost boringly so. The sin of one man copying that of another as just commented upon has far reaching ramifications. Vs. 4 specifies this by saying that all belonging to Baasha either in the city or in the field shall die, dogs and birds consuming them.

Vs. 5 sums up the reign King Baasha succinctly with a kind of rhetorical question found later in vs. 16. That is to say, his actions are recorded in the Book of Chronicles for anyone to read or more practically speaking, have read to them. Chances are that few, if any, bothered. At least a record was kept, embarrassing though it was.

Baasha's son Elah succeeded him when Jehu the prophet comes on the scene one more time, all the while observing the *davar* of the Lord unfolding before his eyes. He couldn't do anything except issue a warning after which he had to stand down and see if it would take effect. This waiting is the most difficult part of his prophetic role even if he knew the final results well beforehand.

The devolution spoken of earlier continues to accelerate. One of Elah's commanders named Zimri assassinates his master and becomes king. The familiar refrain of following Jeroboam applies to him as recounted in vs. 19. Next in line is Omri who's singled out as having done more evil than his predecessors but apparently not outdoing the now thoroughly infamous Jeroboam. One wonders at this bewildering pace of kingly succession why the model of King David isn't applied. In so many instances he had been held up as the rock upon which all his successors were compared and judged. It's as though this continuous strife and sin left him far behind.

At last we come to the final and worst king of them all, Ahab, one of Omri, destined along with his wife Jezebel to be a first class scourge. If the comparisons of previous kings made with Jeroboam weren't sufficiently bad, vs. 31 says it's a "light thing" for him to follow in his infamous predecessor's way, *qalal* (cf. 12.4) meaning to be of little account or cursed. Closely associated with marrying Jezebel is Ahab's immediate worship of Baal as well as making an Asherah (cf. 15.13). This results in the familiar *kahas* (cf. vs. 2) or provoking the Lord far more than his predecessors.

The fast paced account of kings, corruption, murders, worship of alien gods and the like of Chapter Sixteen come to crashing end with the horrifying act of Hiel of Bethel who built Jericho at the cost of his youngest son, Segub. In other words, Segub either died young or was sacrificed after which his body was placed under Jericho's foundation in order to bring good luck, an abomination to the Lord though this isn't mentioned explicitly. Nevertheless, it's in accord with the *davar* of the Lord spoken by Joshua: "Joshua laid an oath upon them at that time saying, 'Cursed before the Lord be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. At the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates'" [Jos 6.26].

2) rum, haphar, nagyd, derek, kahas, 31) qalal, kahas